



Livingston celebrates its silver anniversary

25 years of diversity, innovation and social awareness



Founding Dean Ernest Lynton stops to talk with students as workers ready the first Livingston dorm.



Aerial view of embryonic Livingston College in 1968 shows main academic building at right and three residence quadrangles on left.

Livingston College as it appears today includes modern facilities and green spaces.

The early years

By Douglas Frank

Between 1952 and the early sixties, Ernest Lynton was happily running his own business, doing his research and teaching in the Rutgers physics department.

Then something happened. He was asked by Rutgers to start up a new college and his horizons expanded beyond the physics lab.

The years Lynton spent from 1965, when he was named founding dean of what was to become Livingston College, through the four years of the first graduating class in 1973 were, he notes, "the most difficult, the most exciting and the most rewarding time of my life, there's no question about that."

"It was a time of unbridled optimism and growth, when everybody in higher education thought we would grow indefinitely."

Very quickly, the planning committee for the new college began to focus on a social science emphasis and, more specifically, on urban issues, he remembers.

"Now if we're going to think about the cities, we ought to think about the inhabitants as well," someone suggested. "This was like a revelation. 'Yes, of course,' we thought."

The planners also agreed to "try for numbers [in admissions] that would make minority students less of a minority on campus. We felt that the college as a whole — faculty and administration — should reflect that pluralism, that heterogeneity. And I think we were successful in those things."

"I think we changed the climate of opinion in New Brunswick and within the university as a whole about the issues of student profile and pluralism."

Lynton says he is most proud of Livingston's commitment to helping students become engaged and informed citizens.

That meant bringing together faculty who were themselves policy- and application-oriented, who could bridge the gap between theory and practice and help students bridge that gap.

"This was in line with the Alfred North Whitehead theory of education, the goal of education being the

utilization of knowledge, and not just the acquisition of knowledge," Lynton says.

"I think Livingston really broke new ground, as far as Rutgers is concerned, and was at the forefront of that movement nationally."

"The bottom line is, yes, I am very proud of Livingston," he concludes. "When the residence towers were named after me, I was enormously pleased and deeply touched."



Biology professor W. Robert Jenkins, who was dean of Livingston College for 12 years, pauses on the campus to talk with first-year student Joaquin Hicks and senior Brian Krisman.

Building a college

By Douglas Frank

W. Robert Jenkins, a biology professor at Rutgers since 1960, came to Livingston College in October 1968 on loan for a year to help a planning committee get the new college started.

He stayed for 22 years, first playing an integral role in developing the academic mission of the college, then serving as professor, chair of the biology department, associate dean, acting dean and, lastly, as dean from 1978-1990.

"Most of us were liberals, some were radicals and there were very, very few conservatives," he

remembers of the early planners, "but we generally set out to change society through the educational system, and, by doing that, we changed the educational system as well."

"What we'd hoped to do was to bring in some students who were good enough for college but had not yet achieved the grades to make college. This group was primarily, but not limited to, minority students, in order to give them a chance at a university education."

"The truth is that we probably set out to do too much — better, of course, than doing too little — but you can't do everything and that's

essentially what we were trying to do," he reflects, adding that Livingston helped Rutgers to become a true state university "because of all the additions, the programs and departments, and the kinds of people we were bringing in."

Altogether Livingston developed 16 new or revised programs including computer science, urban planning, community development, anthropology, urban journalism, and "a jazz program that is now a showcase program for the music department."

Jenkins wrote the draft of the physician's assistant program, a cooperative venture with UMDNJ that now is "the best in the country, based on student examination results. It's nice to be a part of something like that."

Today, Jenkins is a professor of biology in FAS-New Brunswick and continues an affiliation with Livingston as a faculty fellow and as an adviser to Livingston health professions students.

He recalls his time at Livingston's helm as a "fantastic experience."

"They were the best students, not necessarily academically, but as people they were the best. They were interesting, full of ideas, willing to be active and willing to stick their necks out for what they thought was a proper cause," he states. "I look back on Livingston with tremendous fondness, and I would take the job again."

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Looking ahead

By Pam Orel

Although it's celebrating its silver anniversary, Livingston College is still a place of educational innovation and social responsibility, ideals that remain from the time of its founding, says recently appointed Dean Arnold Hyndman.

One of several experimental colleges born during a time when traditions were under siege and social justice was front-page news, Livingston survived because it was both free to experiment and firmly anchored to the larger university community, says Hyndman. A strong student body and a dedicated faculty were central to the evolution of the school that today includes some 3,300 students and an estimated 12,000 alumni worldwide.

Hyndman, a neurobiologist with a solid commitment to minority achievement, came to the dean's post in 1993 from the office of the New Brunswick provost and graduate dean.

There, he developed a nationally recognized program for minority graduate students. As Livingston's dean, he's already begun the process of revising the college's core curriculum to better express its special mission.

"The college is seeking a curriculum that will provide a unifying academic experience for all Livingston students," Hyndman says. "The goal is to enhance the students' creative

thinking and to assist them in developing a stronger sense of concern and social responsibility."

Students at Livingston are involved in programs that are unique at Rutgers. For example, new students take a mandatory advising class during their first semester. Small group discussions with an adviser focus on academic priorities, time management and managing the new freedom of college. The program is designed to ease the transition from high school to college and help students who may encounter obstacles and not know where to turn.

Another unique experience for Livingston students is House 26, known as the Democratic House. Students maintain and clean the house in exchange for control over funds which are used for recreation and other programs. The house, located in the Quads, dates to the early years of the college.

Livingston has long celebrated the diversity and talents of its students. But it is just beginning to tap another rich source of growth — its alumni.

Hyndman wants to forge closer ties with alumni. That's a formidable goal: Two years ago, only about 4 percent of alumni contributed to the college; that figure, while nearly doubled, is now only 8 percent. The college is working with alumni to create new roles, like serving as



Livingston College Dean Arnold Hyndman chats with first-year students (from left) Marina Reig, Lynn Astorga and John Bogner.

mentors and participating in career workshops, as well as filling such traditional roles as potential donors and visitors who can help the college connect with its past.

Today, says Hyndman, the goals of diversity, access and excellence that were only visions in 1969 have become realities on the campus.

"The original mission of Livingston has been achieved. We long believed it should be done. We proved that it could be done," Hyndman says. "I see this college as a learning community. The goal is to prepare all of its students for positions of leadership — in the community, the nation and the world."

September 1969

"All of us together are embarked on a great adventure: the exciting, challenging and difficult task of building a new college. We have lived together through these first days of chaos and confusion, and I am most grateful for the patience and good humor which most of you displayed. The spirit of Woodstock was very much in evidence."

Ernest Lynton,
Founding Dean of Livingston
College, welcoming the first group of
about 700 students

September 1969

"Livingston [has] the pride, the spirit, the excitement that help to create that elusive phenomenon we call community."
Daily Targum editorial
"Livingston, the Reality Takes Shape"

November 1972

"Livingston appears to be 'making it' as an imaginative blending of old and new in a multi-racial environment that is virtually unique in today's American universities. It has an extraordinary opportunity to make an impression not only upon education in the university or in New Jersey, but in the nation as a whole."

Report of Henry R. Winkler, then
university vice president,
to the Board of Governors

May 1973

"The most important feature of Livingston's fascinating educational mix is that it provides for all students the full range of opportunities — and encourages each to explore the very limits of his or her potential and aspirations, regardless of background or prior training. You who graduate here today have come from many different societal groups, many races and classes, many backgrounds. You go from here to a wide variety of occupations — further graduate and professional education, medical and law school, jobs in private and public agencies, teaching and, inevitably, some with no jobs at all. A great diversity — but the achievement of the college is that there is no correlation between where you are going and where you came from."

Dean Lynton,
commencement address

January 1976

"Livingston College has injected a new energy in New Jersey's system of higher education by subjecting traditional educational methods to careful scrutiny and developing new approaches where [traditional approaches] had failed to meet the present needs of our students."

Report of the Senate
Education Committee

March 1979

"There were arguments, strong differences, mass meetings. But unlike many other colleges that suffered from such crises and closed, Livingston grew from its experiences."

W. Robert Jenkins,
professor of biology and
dean of the college

May 1994

"There is a Livingston College spirit. There's a concern for individuals and social issues. And Livingston's great strength is still the dedication of its faculty, staff and students."

Dean Arnold Hyndman